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ABSTRACT

The author presents an historical and cultural analysis of the place of women in society. It is stated that historically women have had to assume an aggressive role to become educated. In addition, as far back as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one finds records which indicate that women had to seek opportunities to study and to learn. The point is made that while on the surface it may appear to some that women willingly accepted a more subservient role in education during the early years of our history, one would need to study the culture and attitudes of the time to understand the many barriers which women had to overcome to be permitted even the minimum opportunities to seek education. The question is asked why it is taking so long for women to be recognized as equals in education. This is followed by a discussion of the major influences upon the Women's Rights movement. The author concludes by emphasizing the importance for women of continuing to work for change and to ensure that institutions be responsive to women's needs. (Author/BW)

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STATUS OF PROFESSIONAL WOMEN in HIGHER EDUCATION

Historically, women have had to assume an aggressive role to become educated. As far back as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one finds records which indicate that women had to seek opportunities to study and to learn. Finally, as a result of a series of developments over a long period of time, special schools were opened to women. At first, most of these schools were for women only because it was felt by the male "chauvinist" of that time that women could not handle the strenuous curriculum which men pursued. Oberlin College was among the first of the coeducational colleges to grant degrees to women. However, following the Morrill Act of 1862, when many land grant colleges and universities were established, women were admitted to state institutions. Since that time, most women who have received advanced degrees have received them from state coeducational institutions.

It was not until the late nineteenth century that graduate departments admitted women to their professional schools. The early twentieth century was the greatest period in our history (1920-1940) for women seeking advanced degrees in higher education.

While on the surface it may appear to some that women willingly accepted a more subservient role in education during the early years of our history, one would need to study the culture and attitudes of the time to understand the many barriers which women had to overcome to be permitted even the minimum opportunities to seek an education. In spite of this fact, we know that in every period of history, some few women have excelled. Until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, formal education was generally limited to the elite. However, beginning with the nineteenth century, we find that women representing all economic and social backgrounds have sought opportunities to pursue educational experiences. As women became more involved with education, they, likewise, became more concerned about their status as women. The "cause" of women has covered a long period of time. Recorded successes appear to be few, but historically, in any sociological movement, change appears to come slowly.

Therefore, when we compare what has been happening in the past few years in the area of women's education with that of a hundred years previously, the

results of the more recent years seem astronomical. Why is it taking so long for women to be recognized as equals in education? Why has the percentage of advanced degrees awarded to women decreased since the period between 1920 - 1940's? What has happened between the period 1940 to the present? I need not attempt to give the answers to these questions. You know, as well as I, the many factors which contributed to these situations. What is more important is the fact that recently women have become concerned and involved, and results, minimal as they may seem, are being obtained. In my opinion, it is very unlikely that there will ever again be a period in history when women will remain silent about their status in higher education.

In no way am I saying that "we have arrived." However, what I am saying is that more women are becoming action oriented. It is more acceptable today than ever before to speak out about existing discriminatory conditions. If nothing else, we are beginning to see an attitudinal change about women's role in education, as well as, in society as a whole. We have a long history of inequities and practices to overcome. It is easy to become impatient and to expect changes to come about over night. On the other hand, some prodding may be necessary. The Federal Government has been one of the first to initiate such prodding. The fact that the Health Education and Welfare Office of Civil Rights is attempting to monitor violators of the Executive Order banning sex discrimination on college campuses is, in itself, forcing some positive results. Higher education must depend on Federal funds to survive, and, to receive Federal funds, the laws forbidding sex discrimination must be upheld. I am sure we would be more satisfied if we knew that college administrators were correcting inequities because they felt that it was morally and philosophically the right thing to do rather than for the dollar and cents considerations. Maybe our desires may rest in the hope, that with changes, be they legislated or not, women will be given opportunities to make meaningful contributions in in areas heretofore not open to them. And, it might follow that reasons which have been expounded as justification for sex discrimination will be seen by all as the myths which women know them to be.

Since 1964 and, more recently, in the last five years, women in education have become active in working toward equal educational opportunities for women students and for equality in their own profession. However, women working for equality in education are just a small part of the total Women's Rights

Movement. Without the work of the noble women of the liberation movement who are laying the ground work for us all, I wonder what influence, if any, we would have in bringing about the changes in education which are being considered today. Just as it took riots to focus attention on the inequities in our society in the area of race, I believe that the extreme activities of the liberation movement, questionable as they may appear at times, perform the same function for the cause of women.

It is difficult to say just what has influenced the Women's Rights movement most. We know that several events took place about the same time. For instance: Betty Friedan's book, The Feminine Mystique, published in 1963, was controversial enough that both men and women read it, talked about it, and debated it. Soon after its publication, came the Civil Rights Act of 1964, with the obvious omission of the work "sex" in many areas of the document and especially, in TITLE VI, Sec. 601. ("No person in the United States shall on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving financial assistance.") Furthermore, the integration movements, the riots of the sixties, the troubles on the campuses, and the sundry happenings of that period contributed to a social awareness, a consciousness of all the inequities that existed among peoples. One of these of course was the discrimination, subtle as it may have seemed at times, of a large segment of the population--that of women.

While the glamour of the liberation movement may be fading into the past, the work to be done is overwhelming. Every phase of a woman's life is in the process of being studied, evaluated, written about, criticized, etc. by some special woman's committee or task force. A number of universities have established or are in the process of establishing affirmative action plans to end discrimination against women which extend beyond the requirements of the Office of Civil Rights.

The Office for Civil Rights has been inundated with complaints both from individuals as well as from institutions. One of the more recent reports of the American Association of Higher Education states that "some 300 higher education institutions have been named in general allegations and approximately 140 individual complaints of sex discrimination have been made against

colleges and universities." The Office has found that the job of monitoring university and colleges with federal contracts has become a monumental task which has required a staff increase this year of more than double the size of the staff of last year.

Through on-campus Task Force Committees on Women's Concerns, women and men are making the College community more conscious of the subtle as well as the more overt discriminatory practices on the campuses. Administrators are beginning to set realistic goals to end many of these practices.

Professional groups of all types are joining in the efforts which are being made to bring about changes in women's status. Such groups as women in science, women in medicine, women in law, women in management, women in the church, women in politics, to name but a few, have established commissions within their own professional organizations to work toward abolishing discriminatory practices. The American Association of University Professors, along with its subsidiary organizations of most all academic disciplines, has working committees highlighting inequities among college faculties in the area of the number of women on the faculty, the rate of pay, rank, tenure, leave policies, etc. The American Management Association is sponsoring special seminars for women in Management, and women are being actively recruited for the summer institutes of educational management conducted on the Harvard Campus.

As most of us are aware, partly as a result of the criticism and hard work of a number of women, the American Council on Higher Education has taken several steps to improve its image in the area of women's affairs--one giant step being that the theme of its national meeting this fall will be, "Women's Concerns."

Another women's group that continues to take leadership in education for women, the American Association of University Women, scored a hit this year in its publication "Standards for Women in Higher Education." This document was adopted in principle by the Executive Committee of NASPA at its January meeting and was recommended to the members as a document to be used as a guideline when planning affirmative action steps on individual campuses.

The American Association of University Women again assumed a leadership role, by bringing together representatives from twelve professional groups including NASPA, on February 23 in Washington, D. C., for a Conference of Educational Organizations on Women in Higher Education. The purpose of this meeting was to "draft a joint statement regarding women in higher education similar to that on Rights and Freedoms of Students and to recommend joint action in its use." This document is presently in the process of being developed and it is hoped that it will be ready for individual Executive Boards to review in the fall.

In our own profession a tripartite Task Force on Women's Concerns, composed of representatives from ACPA, NAWDC, and NASPA was established this year. There are both men and women on this Task Force and we should hear more about its work this coming year.

The question that concerns us all still remains, is the Women's Rights movement a serious movement or is it an opportunity for new publications to be sold, new committees to be formed, new media to be created? From the deluge or materials, programs, films, etc., one could easily feel that it is a fad, a passing fancy, that will go away just as fads do. Even though the impact of the movement may be felt more now than ever again in the future, it is my belief, that concern for Women's Rights and, especially, women in education, will not fade away if we are serious in what we are attempting to do.

We cannot let ourselves become easily discouraged and give up because changes are coming about slowly. We should not take a defeatist attitude because while a few changes are being made, we can read about and know that many inequities continue to prevail. And, we should not expect the changes to come about automatically. We each must do our part. There are so many ways that we can work toward bringing about changes. All of us do not need to join a movement--neither do we need to feel guilty if we are not on the street corner preaching Women's Rights. We can, however, serve as individual monitors on our own campuses. We can do our part to bring about attitudinal changes where they are needed. Furthermore, we can work toward making ourselves more marketable. Many of us fail to take advantage of institutes, workshops, and in-service training programs because we have assumed, rightly so in the past,

that we would never be able to use the skills we acquired. Our pride and self-esteem may hinder us many times because we object to the whole idea of having to prove ourselves. It is well known, however, that in the past we have not had the same opportunities as our male colleagues in higher levels of administration. If administrative positions, in the future, are going to be given to the person who qualifies, and if the qualifications require having had previous administrative experience, then it would seem to me that we should seek as many ways as we can to get these experiences. It is not necessary to be an administrator to get such experience. We can gain invaluable experiences by working on committees of the college, by serving on Boards of all types, and by working closely with administrators on the campus.

I do not mean to imply that every professional woman in higher education should aspire to becoming a college administrator. What I am attempting to illustrate is the fact that we need to know ourselves well. We need to know what we are capable of doing and where we can best do what we are capable of doing. We should, then, work for the best opportunities available to us. We should not be satisfied until we have reached the levels to which we have aspired and we should become more competitive. If we believe an injustice has been done to us, we should take whatever steps necessary to right that injustice.

What, then, is the status of women in Higher Education today? According to reports, in comparison to the past, only a small percentage of women are completing their education through the masters and doctorate degrees, while at the same time, those who do complete advanced degrees, perform at about the same level as men. Discrimination continues to exist in college admissions practices especially at the graduate level. People continue to refer to the education of women as a poor investment of educational resources. Women faculty members continue to take longer than men to reach the level of professor in the academic arena. And, the job market for women has not improved. Sounds very bleak, does it not?

On the other hand, a number of good things are happening. A few women are being appointed as Deans of Students in co-educational schools which heretofore never have had women Deans. A few women are being appointed to

influencial Boards and Committees. An awareness of sex discrimination is being openingly acknowledged by educators. If for no reason other than fear, administrators are paying some attention to the need to have women on their staffs at all levels. We are beginning to see an attitudinal change take place.

We have a long way to go but a beginning has been made. And, to quote from the Newman Report, "Colleges and universities have an unparalleled opportunity to affect the status of women. Their role in the transmission of values and the preparation of men and women for careers makes this opportunity a responsibility that these educational institutions must not ignore if they are to be responsive to the needs of society." And, it is up to each of us as individual educators to see that our institutions do not ignore such responsibility.

Even though the facts seem grim, the challenge remains. My feelings are best expressed by a few lines abstracted from Tennyson's, Ulysses:

"Some work of noble note, may yet be done....
Come my friends, 'tis not too late to seek
A newer world....
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

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